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The President's Daily Brief

20 April 1970

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~~*Top Secret*~~

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

20 April 1970

ILLEGIB

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Reports of active Communist military elements in several eastern Cambodian provinces are a matter of increasing concern in Phnom Penh. *(Page 1)*

In Laos, the Communists moved additional reinforcements into the Long Tieng area over the weekend. *(Page 3)*

Reports of atrocities against Vietnamese in Cambodia have further complicated President Thieu's problems with students and Buddhists in Saigon. *(Page 4)*

Moscow and Peking have had their most biting exchange of polemics since the Peking talks began. *(Page 5)*

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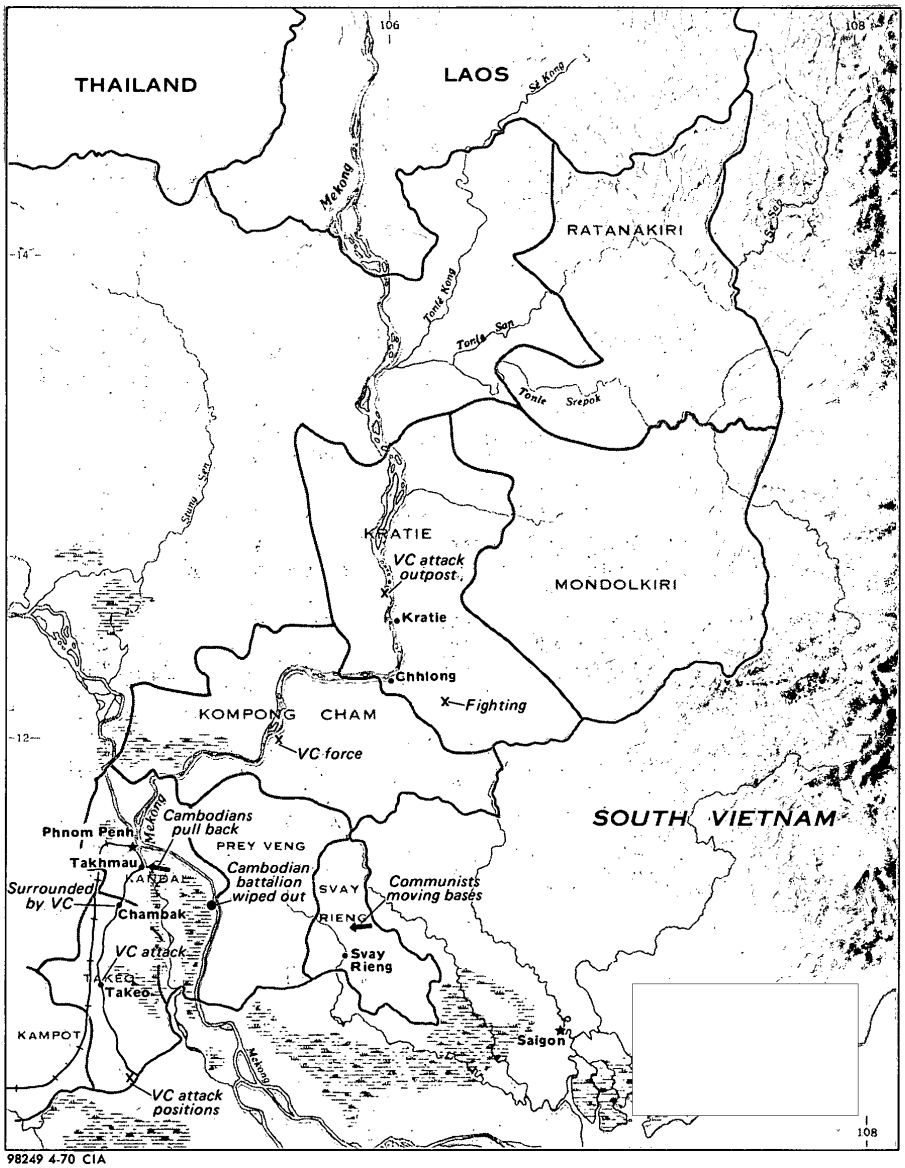
CAMBODIA: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

Fragmentary reports indicate that Viet Cong, North Vietnamese, and indigenous Communist elements have been active in almost every province of eastern Cambodia during the past several days. For the most part, these actions appear to be part of the continuing effort to protect and expand Communist bases along the border. There are fresh signs, however, of increased Communist activity farther westward, well away from the border bases. These may be a precursor of a new effort to keep Cambodian security forces tied down to defensive positions in the interior.

The heaviest action was located in Kandal and Takeo provinces south of Phnom Penh. According to Cambodian commanders, an army battalion guarding a Mekong River post was "annihilated" only 20 miles south of the capital. We cannot confirm this engagement but if true it is the closest probe to Phnom Penh since the Communist offensive began. Farther south, the Communists on 18 April once again raided the provincial capital of Takeo, knocking out a bridge and cutting the rail line that runs from the town down toward Kompong Som (formerly Sihanoukville).

Renewed fighting was also reported in Svay Rieng Province, where South Vietnamese forces have been raiding Communist bases on Cambodian soil almost daily. The Cambodian commander in the area has told South Vietnamese officers that the Communists are moving supplies and base facilities deeper into Cambodia. He fears that they will soon attack Svay Rieng town and has asked for additional South Vietnamese ground and air attacks. He claimed that he was acting with the full authority of leaders in Phnom Penh.

To the north, Communist penetrations as far west as the Mekong River have been reported. These actions appear to involve only small Communist elements, [redacted] 50X1 50X1 50X1

(continued)

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The military developments of the past several days apparently have greatly alarmed the diplomatic community in the capital. [redacted] 50X1 50X1

[redacted] The ranking French military adviser in Cambodia, General Vieil, has told Chargé Rives that he believed an all-out Communist offensive would occur within a month. 50X1

For their part, the Cambodian leaders on 17 April issued an obscurely worded directive to all units, asking them to prepare for "total war," and begin organizing "partisan" bands. Cambodian strategic thinking has long postulated a reversion to guerrilla war in the face of a Vietnamese attack. In another sign that the leaders in Phnom Penh are feeling the heat, [redacted] to arrange for the deployment of South Vietnamese irregular forces into Takeo Province. 50X1

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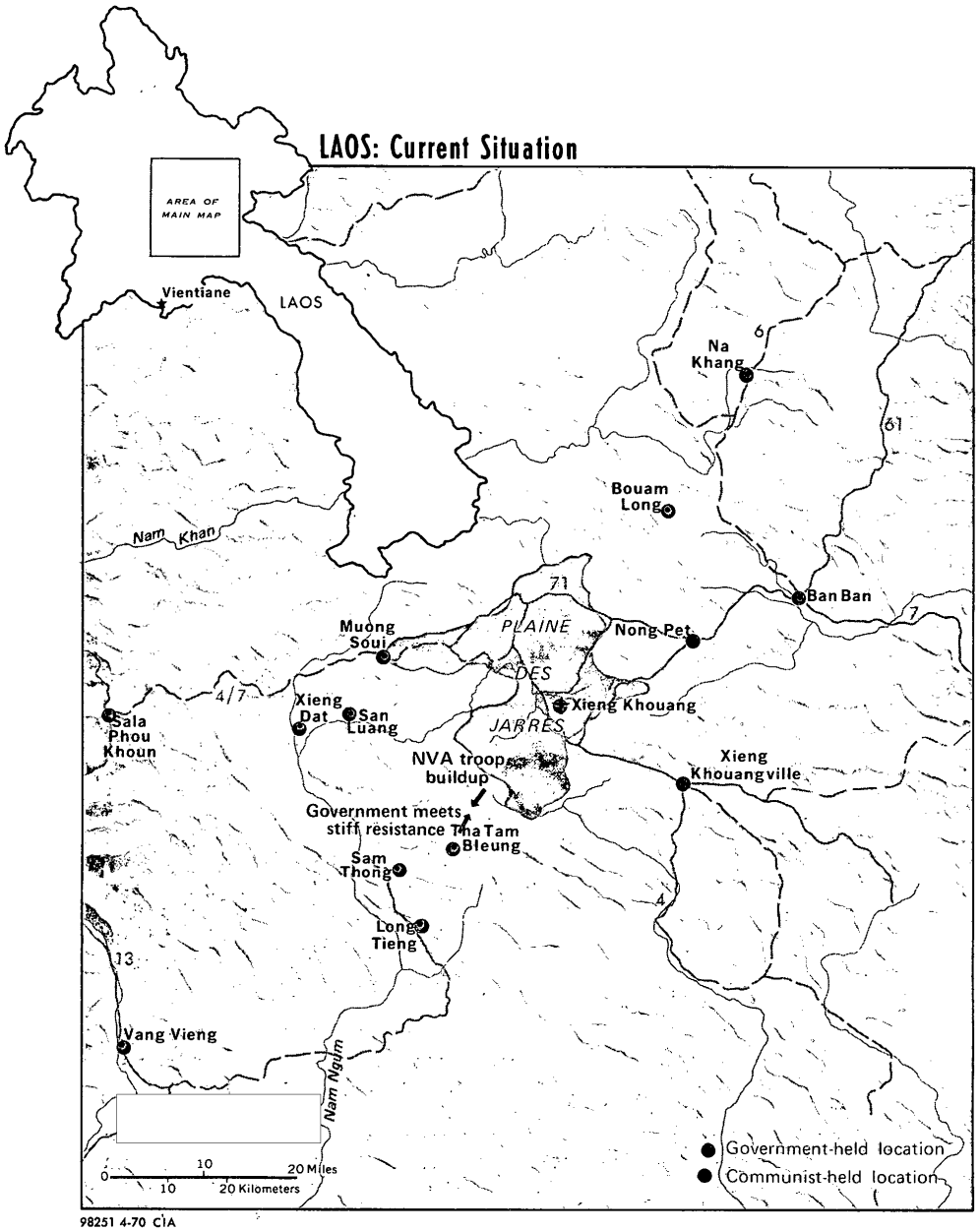

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LAOS

There was little change in the situation around Long Tieng over the weekend, although the Communists did move in additional reinforcements. Another battalion-level radio terminal associated with the North Vietnamese 312th Division was identified, bringing to three the number of terminals that have moved south of the Plaine in the last week. Government forces operating out of Tha Tam Bleung are running into stiffer enemy resistance.

Despite these further signs of a possible renewed enemy push in the weeks to come, the Communists do not seem ready yet to mount a major drive against Long Tieng. Some of the fresh units are coming in to replace rather than augment troops of the 316th Division, which has carried the burden of the fighting in the Long Tieng area. Intercepts indicate that the enemy's main concerns right now are to bring in additional supplies and to evacuate the wounded.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Pressures are building up on the Thieu government to do something about the anti-Vietnamese pogrom in Cambodia. Students and Buddhists, already disaffected with the government, took to the streets over the weekend protesting the atrocities and demanding that action be taken to redress the situation. Local political leaders and trade unionists joined them yesterday for memorial services held at the An Quang Pagoda, long a center for antigovernment activity. The oppositionist National Salvation Front released a communiqué signed by nearly 100 politicians appealing for UN intervention.

The Thieu government clearly recognizes the need for action, but at the same time it has been anxious not to roil the Cambodians to the point where prospects for improved relations might be jeopardized. So far the middle course it has tried to steer has not been very productive.

The Cambodians have not yet responded to a South Vietnamese offer to send an official delegation to arrange for repatriation of Vietnamese refugees. [redacted]

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The government may soon have to do better, or be confronted with more serious opposition than anything it has faced in recent months. This will be especially so if the students and allied dissidents choose to use this emotional issue as their principal weapon against Thieu.

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COMMUNIST CHINA - USSR

The deep-seated disagreements between Peking and Moscow have bubbled to the surface on the eve of the Lenin centenary celebrations. In a lengthy commentary on 17 April, the Chinese blasted the Brezhnev leadership as "fools" on the "brink of their downfall," and ridiculed the ideological theses published last December in commemoration of the Lenin centennial.

This is the strongest Chinese indictment of the Soviet leadership since the Peking talks began. In addition to discrediting the Soviet anniversary celebrations, the Chinese probably launched this bitter personal attack in reply to Brezhnev's strong public charge on 14 April that Chinese "provocations" were jeopardizing progress in the Peking talks.

The Chinese commentary may also be related to Sino-Soviet maneuvering on the exchange of ambassadors. By attacking the ideological theses at this time, Peking may be indirectly voicing objection to the new Soviet ambassador-designate to Peking, Vladimir Stepakov. As former head of the Soviet Propaganda Department, Stepakov probably shared responsibility for the publication of the theses.

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Soviet Bear D Naval Reconnaissance Aircraft

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Unrefueled range - 9250 nm

Mission radius - 4600 nm

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NOTES

USSR: Two Bear D aircraft--the naval reconnaissance version of the TU-95 heavy bomber--landed in Havana, Cuba, [redacted] 50X1 50X1

Their mission probably was to provide reconnaissance support for units participating in the worldwide Soviet naval exercise "Okean." [redacted] 50X1

Hungary: The Hungarian celebrations of the Lenin centennial are proceeding according to plan despite earlier indications--reported in The President's Daily Brief of 15 April--that they were to be canceled. It now appears that the Hungarians misrepresented the withdrawal of US Ambassador Puhan's invitation as cancellation of the events. Budapest now claims that the diplomatic corps is being excluded from the events because they are party and not government celebrations. The Bulgarians have ignored this distinction, however, and invited the US Ambassador to attend yesterday's festivities in Sofia.

Jordan: Public security officials figured largely in the cabinet reshuffle announced yesterday by King Husayn. The new deputy premier, defense minister, and director of security may have earned their promotion during the hard-nosed negotiations in the recent settlement with the fedayeen. The minister of interior and the director of security were removed, perhaps as scapegoats for the attacks on the US Embassy last week. [redacted] 50X1 50X1

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